ACIDOTON (EUPHORBIACEAE) IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Acidoton **nicaraguensis** (Hemsl.) Webster, comb, nov.

Cleidion ? nicaraguense Hemsl., Biol. Centr.-Amer. **3:** 130, 1883.
Gitara panamensis Croizat, Jour. Arnold Arb. **26:** 192, 1945.

As treated in the last monographic revision by Pax & Hoffmann (Pflanzenr. **IV,** 147, IX (Heft 68): 24-26, 1919), *Acidoton* is a small West Indian genus of two species. A few years after that treatment, Pax & Hoffmann described a new genus *Gitara* (Pflanzenr. **IV,** 147, XVII (Heft 85): 187, 1924) on the basis of a Venezuelan plant, and noted that it was very close to *Tragia.* Finally, Croizat (Jour. Arnold Arb. **26:** 192, 1945) described *Gitara panamensis* on the basis of a specimen from Panama (Darien, betw Pinogana & Yavisa, *Pittier* 6543; holotype A; isotype US). He was correct in seeing an affinity between the Panamanian plant and *Gitara venezolana,* but neither he nor Pax & Hoffmann seems to have noticed a possible resemblance with *Acidoton.*

Recently, in attempting to fix the identity of *Cleidion ? nicaraguense* Hemsl., I found that the type specimen of *Gitara panamensis* Croizat agreed closely with Hemsley's description, as well as a specimen from Nicaragua (*Engelsing s.n.,* NY). Although I have not been able to examine Hemsley's types (Nicaragua, Chontales, *Tate* 352, 455; presumably at K), there can be little doubt that we are dealing with a single species which ranges from Nicaragua to Panama.

The Central American species of *Acidoton* resembles the West Indian ones in having a large number of stamens (24-35), axillary inflorescences, and stinging hairs present on various organs. The apical tuft of small stinging hairs on the anthers is very similar in all of the species, and furnishes a good diagnostic character to distinguish *Acidoton* from *Tragia.* There can be no doubt that *Acidoton* is very close to *Tragia,* as suggested by Pax & Hoffmann when they proposed *Gitara.* However, the apically tufted anthers and large number of stamens clearly set *Acidoton* apart from most species of *Tragia.* One Mexican species, *T. bailloniana* Muell. Arg., which was made the basis for the genus *Zuckertia* by Baillon does agree with *Acidoton* in its large stamen number and apiculate anthers. For the present, it seems best to leave it in *Tragia* because of its climbing habit, but its status may well be subject to reevaluation.

The relationship between the Central American and Venezuelan taxa of *Acidoton* remains to be elucidated. They are doubtless closely related, and might possibly prove to be races of a single wide-ranging species. However, the differences in leaf shape and venation pointed out by Croizat appear to be sufficient to justify maintaining (*ad interim*) the Venezuelan taxon as a direct species:
Acidoton **venezolanus** (Pax & Hoffm.) Webster, comb. nov.

Gitara venezolana Pax & Hoffm., Pflanzenr. **IV,** 147, XVII (Heft 85): 187, 1924.

As thus construed, *Acidoton* is now a Caribbean genus with six species: 3 in Hispaniola, 1 in Jamaica, 1 in Central America, and 1 in northern South America.
—*Grady Webster, University of California, Davis.*